



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Highlights

December 2019: *The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge is located in ten locations on the mainland and near shore island along the northern shore of the Long Island Sound in Connecticut.*

Connecticut River Paddlers Trail Grows at Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

Staff from the Conte Refuge and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) worked to expand the Connecticut River Paddlers trail this month. Working at the Fannie Stebbins Unit in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, two AMC stewards constructed two tent platforms and a moldering privy along the mainstem of the Connecticut River. The primitive camp site will be available for paddlers as part of the Connecticut River Paddlers trail. There are currently more than 50 sites, starting at the headwaters in New Hampshire's great north woods and continuing south along the 410 mile River. The camp sites are perfect resting stops for all levels of paddlers. For more information visit <https://www.connecticutriverpaddlerstrail.org/crpt7/>

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Refuge Staff Promotes Environmental Justice



Photo Credit: USFWS

This month staff from the Stewart B. McKinney NWR visited the Common Ground High School in New Haven to discuss environmental justice and how it relates to the students' work on restoring an unused vacant lot to a healthy, ecologically and community friendly park. The entire project is a great example of positive outcomes for people, wildlife and the environment when groups come together with a common goal.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

New Outdoor Class Room Pond at Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge is one step closer to completing our Outdoor Living Classroom at the Fort River Division. This month we created another pond and wetland area that will not only serve as habit for a variety of wetland plants and animals, but will be used as a fully-accessible hands-on educational platform for a variety of visitors to the refuge. The next steps to complete the outdoor classroom are building the boardwalk, pavilion and exploration platform, as well as planting native wetland plants throughout the area. The space should be available to use for our spring programs.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov



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Eagle Scout Project Results in New Observation Blind at S.B. McKinney Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

When Gavin Hauswirth—a longtime refuge volunteer—came to us with an idea for a new platform along the refuge's Salt Meadow Trail, staff was very receptive. Gavin wanted to build the platform as an Eagle Scout Project, placing it by the marsh where wading birds and ducks are often seen. After months of planning, and with help from facilities specialist Sean Healy, Gavin and his volunteer group of Scouts built the enclosed platform and blind. Everyone involved was appreciative of the comradery, learning new skills, and the complimentary donuts and hot cocoa.

For more information contact: Shaun_Roche@fws.gov

Working With Partners Over the Holiday



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge staff helped conduct watershed table programs at the Springfield Science Museum over the holiday school vacation week. The Museum saw high attendance over the break, and Conte Staff was happy to take part and help with programs. The Springfield Science Museum is located within the Connecticut River Watershed, making it a perfect location for us to highlight the Refuge's role in conservation in urban areas such as Springfield, Massachusetts.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Finding of No Significant Impact Released for Bri-Mar Stable



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Finding of No Significant Impact or FONSI for the former Bri-Mar Stable, was released on December 4, 2019. Alternative C was the selected alternative, which calls for demolition of the Stable, located at the Fort River Division. The demolition will take place after the Service's 30 day waiting period, where no irreparable or retrievable actions can be taken.

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Winter's New England Weather at the Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

Our wonderful New England weather during the month of December was full of surprises. Deep snow in the beginning of the month and deep water at the end of the month, have both benefited our wetlands. This pictured wetland area was created in 2018 to serve as an aquatic pollinator exhibit along the Fort River Birding and Nature Trail. It was also very popular with spring peepers, frogs, American toads and a variety of insect eating birds.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Essex County Winter Deer Yard Survey



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife are conducting a winter deer survey in Northeast Vermont. The survey area covers seven towns and includes more than 200 individual landowners. Local conservation groups and hunters are volunteering their time to survey 390 one kilometer grid squares throughout the winter of 2020.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Northern Conte Building Demolition



Photo Credit: USFWS

Refuge staff from both Conte and Umbagog National Wildlife Refuges removed three structures totaling 5,677 square feet in the northern part of the Connecticut River watershed. The effort was undertaken to reduce the Conte Refuge's maintenance backlog and environmental footprint. The underutilized buildings were located at the Blueberry Swamp (NH) and Nulhegan Basin (VT) Divisions.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Mascoma Easement Habitat Management Meeting



Photo Credit: USFWS

A meeting was held at the Nulhegan Basin Division office in December to discuss the development of an easement baseline report and management plan for the Mascoma easement (NH). In attendance were representatives from Bearhill Conservancy, Moosewood Ecological, Redstart Natural Resource Management and the Natural Resources Conservation Services.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov